

Consider

by Alykt

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Summary: William Drake, Iceman's father, is forced to confront his own bigotry.

Consider

Disclaimer: These characters belong to Marvel, not me. I'm not making any money off this venture; my only payment is feedback from kind readers (hint, hint).

> Notes: This is my attempt to explain William Drake's (Iceman's father) sudden transformation from a man blinded by prejudice to a supporter of mutant rights. I've borrowed wholesale some Scott Lobdell-penned dialogue from Uncanny X-Men #289-90 and 319, as well as made a nod or two to Dark Mark's wonderful fic "The Iceman Goeth."
 Deification: My abundant thanks go out to Mitai for beta-reading. You're wonderful, girl!

> Feedback: All responses to this story (flames excluded, of course), will be properly worshipped. Just send it all on to alykat@subreality.com<p>

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"Their kind are taking over the neighborhood, bringing down property values and good old-fashioned family values with their way of life," thundered William Drake as he stabbed his fork at his roast beef.

His wife Maddy, seated across the dinner table from him, let out a small sigh as she poked nervously at her mashed potatoes. When William got on one of his tirades, she'd learned it was best to just let him talk it out. Arguing with him only served to prolong things.

Their 7-year-old son Bobby hadn't yet learned that lesson.

"Who ya talkin' 'bout, Dad?" Bobby asked, his mouth full of mashed potatoes.

"Those ni--" William caught the warning glance from his wife and briefly cleared his throat. "Those colored people who moved in down the street. Wilson, I think their name was. Black woman and two little kids."

Bobby smiled, oblivious to his father's ire. "I think I met one of 'em today at school. Tommy Wilson's in Miss Nancy's class, not mine, but we met at recess and rode home on the bus together. Did you know he useta live in --"

"Robert," his father said sternly. "I don't want you to have anything to do with that boy or his family, are we understood?"

Bobby's eyes narrowed in confusion. "What's wrong with 'em?"

"I just don't want you going near them. They're not like us. Now, are we understood?"

"Umm...I guess so." Bobby fidgeted nervously in his seat, uncomfortable under his father's stern gaze. "Umm...May I be 'scused please?"

William glanced at his son's food-laden plate. "Not until --"

"Yes, young man," Maddy interrupted. "Put your plate by the sink on your way out, okay, Bobby?"

"Yes, Mom." Bobby hopped from his seat, carried his plate to the sink as told and ran out the back door to play outside.

Inside the house, William broke the tense silence. "I don't need you interrupting me in front of the boy. He needs to learn to take orders from his father, not be coddled by his mother."

"He's heard enough," Maddy said quietly as she began clearing dishes from the table. "I'd had enough. Bobby's had a hard enough time making friends at school. You don't need to be tossing away the ones he does have."

"It's for his own good, Maddy. I know their kind -- if they're not in jail, they're stirring up trouble. Drug addicts and criminals, I say."

"William, he's just a child."

"Oh, they all learn it young. And if this Tommy fellas isn't into all that rabble-rousing now, he will be soon enough -- and he'll drag our Bobby down, too." He slammed his palm down on the table emphatically. "And you wanted to welcome them to the neighborhood!" he said with disbelief, gesturing to a half-assembled basket of assorted goods on the kitchen counter.

Maddy sighed and turned her attention to washing the dishes. "I'm sorry, dear," she said wearily.

William stood up from the table and brought his dinner plate over to the sink. Wrapping an arm around his wife's waist, he gave her a

small hug. "That's okay, dear. You just didn't know."

He turned and rummaged through the welcome basket. He grinned as he pulled out a small bag of cookies. "Perfect to wash down that wonderful dinner."

William walked out of the kitchen toward the back door, pausing to pull a cigar out of a drawer. Once on the back porch, he lit the cigar and drew in a long puff, feeling his tired muscles relax as he slowly blew the smoke out through his nostrils and mouth.

He glanced back through the window at Maddy dutifully scrubbing the dinner dishes, then turned his attention out toward the sea. He had worked hard to earn the comfort his family now enjoyed. Those tours in the military, then the years in the workforce, where he toiled to save enough to make sure he could support a family. He had married late and had Bobby even later, but he felt he had done the right thing by waiting so long. He and Maddy almost had enough now to pay to send the boy to college.

Not that he wouldn't make Bobby earn some of it himself when he was old enough, William reminded himself. You can't have everything in life handed to you. Have to earn it.

William stood, puffing thoughtfully on his cigar, and began walking along the beach. He found his son a ways down, building what resembled a sandcastle.

Bobby looked up and smiled triumphantly when he saw his father. Scrambling to his feet, Bobby spread his arms wide and exclaimed, "Ta da!" He gestured toward the small hills of sand at his feet. "So, Pops, what do you think?"

William cocked his head as he looked first at the "sandcastle," then at his son. He took a puff from his cigar. "Sandcastles?" he asked. "I think it's hardly a skill that'll serve you well in life, Robert. A man doesn't get anywhere by dreaming, boy -- by making castles in the sand."

He shook his head as his son's proud grin fell. "Watch me work on the house sometime, Bobby. You might learn some real skills there."

William reached out and ruffled his son's hair, then turned to head back to the house, his after-dinner cigar finished.

* * *

> <p>William Drake considered himself a man of reason. Human beings were not capable of freezing objects without the help of machinery or Mother Nature. Yet the bathtub in front of him filled with solid ice went against everything he had ever known. <p>

His little 12-year-old Bobby should not be able to do this.

Yet the bathtub -- and the frozen pitcher of iced tea, and the sink of frozen-solid dishwater and the spontaneously created ice cubes -- was proof. Of something.

What does this mean? William wondered. No human should be able to do

this. This is not humanly possible.

Unless...

William pushed the thought out of his mind as he looked at his son and wife sitting expectantly on the edge of the bathtub. Bobby seemed to cringe away from his father's view, trying to hide behind his mother. William shook his head.

"Robert, come here." He motioned for his son to approach where he stood in the doorway.

Bobby stood and shuffled nervously across the room toward his father, trying hard not to meet his eyes.

Still sitting on the edge of the bathtub, Maddy followed her son's movement with her eyes, then looked up at her husband as if imploring him to be gentle with the boy.

His son's fear and wife's look struck William to his heart, and he felt bad for his son -- and sadly dwelled on what pain this new discovery could bring for his son. He knelt down and placed his hand on Bobby's shoulder.

"Son, look at me." Bobby raised his head, nervously chewing his lower lip. William closed his eyes in silent prayer and took a deep breath. Opening his eyes, he began, "Bobby, you can't show anyone this or tell them about it. This...ice talent...of yours separates you from everyone else, makes you different. People don't like what's different. This has to stay secret. A big family secret. You understand that?"

Bobby nodded his head rapidly, still chewing his lower lip.

"Now go outside. Your mother and I have something to discuss." His son nodded his head and left the room at a near sprint. "And, for goodness sake, don't freeze anything!"

Maddy signed disapprovingly. "Haven't you scared him enough for one day, William? He was frightened to death to tell you about this."

William shook his head and began to pace around the bathroom. "A good thing you told me -- before he somehow managed to show off this new...talent...in public. He wouldn't have the sense to hold himself back unless we told him to. Turn this place into some goddamn freak show, for all we know."

Maddy stood and put her arm around her husband's waist to both hug him and stop his pacing. "It's not his fault, William. He can't help it."

"You bet he can help it," William answered sharply, pulling away. "If he's going to get anywhere in this world, he goddamn well better learn how to help it."

Maddy shook her head and sighed. "I'd best go back to the kitchen and finish up dinner," she said, slipping out the door past her husband.

* * *

> <p>Leaning back in his armchair, William Drake exhaled slowly as he raised a hand to massage his throbbing temple. His wife sat to his right in a matching armchair; she leaned forward, looking expectantly at him. <p>

"We did the right thing for him, right, William?" Maddy asked hopefully.

He continued to massage away his headache. "Sending Bobby to that Xavier school was the best thing for him, Maddy. We discussed this."

"I know, I know...I just worry about him is all. He's never been away from home before -- not like this, at least -- and --"

"Maddy, the boy's gonna have to learn to fend for himself sometime. You can't mother him forever. What happened last night with him using his powers to save that girl -- the cat's out of the bag."

"But Professor Xavier said --"

"Yeah, that Xavier fella said he'd fixed things somehow so folks wouldn't remember, but you knew Bobby's slip up with that...power...of his sometime. Boy has no discipline. Maybe this special school will teach him some -- and teach him what the real world accepts. The real world doesn't take kindly to freaks, Maddy."

"Our boy is not a freak," Maddy whispered, sinking slowly back into her seat.

The two sat in silence as the daylight dimmed into night.

* * *

> <p>"I just don't understand why a good-looking boy like Bobby feels the need to complicate his life by dating an Oriental," William complained to his wife as they prepared to leave their house. "Like he doesn't have enough problems just being a mutant." <p>

Maddy reached out to straighten her husband's coat. "Oh, William -- sometimes your thinking is absolutely archaic!" She flipped off the light switch in the front room.

"There's nothing old-fashioned about morals, Maddy," William said sternly as the two walked out the front door.

Maddy could feel the tension creep up her shoulders, but she was determined to keep the conversation light and the evening pleasant -- for Bobby's sake, at least. This would be the first time they would meet their son's longtime girlfriend, Opal Tanaka. It wouldn't do if the evening got off to a bad start.

"Bobby seems very happy with Opal," she asserted. "Isn't that what's important?"

"What kind of name is Opal, anyway?" William grumbled. "It's a rock, for crying out loud."

He continued his grumbling as they got into the car and drove into the city to meet Bobby. They were the first to arrive at the restaurant, and William perused the menu as they waited.

Bobby and Opal arrived a few minutes later. William ignored them as Bobby escorted his date to the table. "Mom, Dad," Bobby said proudly, his arm around Opal's shoulder, "I'd like you to meet Opal Tanaka."

Opal shook Maddy Drake's hand. "It's a pleasure, Mrs. Drake."

"Maddy, please," she responded cheerfully.

Opal extended her hand to greet Bobby's father. "Mr. Drake...?"

William continued to stare at the menu. "I recommend the veal," he said in a low voice.

Opal stepped back toward Bobby, whose anger was plainly shown on his face.

"Oh, William," Maddy softly scolded. Trying to quickly ease the tension, she stood and guided Opal to her seat, trying to reassure her. "Come, sit down. It's all right, dear."

"'All right,' my ice!" Bobby said angrily, glaring at his father.

Opal tugged urgently at Bobby's sleeve. "Bobby, please -- let it go."

He shook his head. "Not a chance! I've stood up to the Sentinels. I'm not about to back down to some 70-year-old man with a chip on his shoulder!" Bobby turned to his father. "What was that all about, Dad?"

William Drake finally looked up at his son, anger reflected plainly in his face. "I think what the two of you are doing is vulgar. I thought we brought you up better than that --"

He stopped short as a tall Asian man in gold body armor suddenly appeared in front of their table. "I hate to break this up," the man said, "but you are about to die. I thought you should know."

"Hiro?!" Opal exclaimed.

Bobby rose quickly to his feet. "Kidnapping Opal was bad enough. But threatening a guy's parents...? That's low." He shifted into ice form. "I would have expected better from a born-and-bred honor freak like you!"

Hiro regarded Bobby calmly. "And you would have been right. If it was my intent to kill you, you would have been dead by now. Rather, I am here to rescue you and your family."

Bobby shook his head in disbelief. "Rescue? From who?!"

At the table, William Drake had stood angrily and was pulling his wife to her feet when six others, armed similarly to Hiro, suddenly appeared. "From us," one said. "Because he knows in order for vengeance to be exacted, Robert Drake's parents must die!"

William grunted with frustrated anger as Bobby pushed him and Maddy to the ground and froze their table into a barrier between them and their attackers. He didn't know who his attackers were or why they wanted to kill him and his wife. And it angered him further that he wasn't out there in the fray himself, instead being forced to rely on his son the mutant and a half-dressed Oriental for his and his wife's protection.

Well, he could protect himself and Maddy just fine without their help.

He had almost gotten to his feet when a tug at his jacket brought him back down to his knees. An instant later, a flaming chair flew over where his head had just been. William allowed himself a small sigh of relief, then turned his head, expecting to see Maddy at his side.

Instead, he saw Opal, her hand still grasping his jacket pocket. She'd saved his life.

This...Oriental...girl had saved his life?

He exploded. "Exactly the type of wacky ninjaness I'd expect from you and yours!" he roared at her above the din of battle.

Maddy pushed him away from the girl. "William, please! You can't blame this on Bobby's girlfriend!"

"Says you, Maddy!" he thundered. "We no sooner sit down to dinner than her old boyfriend shows up shouting death threats!"

"But, Mr. Drake," Opal stammered, "you heard what Hiro said. He came back to help Bobby!"

"My son is the Iceman -- an X-Man for crying out loud!" William spat, shaking a finger at Opal. "He doesn't need help defending his parents from your foreign friends." William pulled Maddy to her feet. "Let's get out of here. The last thing he needs is hostages to worry about!"

"But, Opal...?" Maddy protested.

"I can't leave Bobby," Opal insisted.

With a rougher jerk on her arm, William pulled Maddy out the back door of the restaurant. "We're leaving. Now."

"What about Bobby? And Opal?" she protested.

"Their kind are just magnets for trouble. They got themselves into this mess. They can get themselves out just fine."

They got into the car and drove away in silence. Maddy kept her eyes on the restaurant until they had pulled out of sight.

* * *

> <p>William sat silently at the dinner table, impatiently tapping his foot to the time of the second hand on his wristwatch. He turned to face his wife, who was leaning against the counter, staring at the pot roast in the oven. "What time did he say he's be here again?" he asked testily. <p>

"He said he'd be here at six for dinner," she answered wearily.

"I swear, that boy doesn't know the meaning of 'on time,'" he grumbled. "Meanwhile, dinner's been ready for an hour and I'm --"

He paused when he heard the sound of a car on the gravel driveway.
"Must be home now."

William peered through the window and saw a jeep in the driveway with two people inside. There was no sign of movement. Stopping first to light a cigar, he turned on the front porch light and stepped outside.

"Are you two familiar with the concept of neighbors?" he said disapprovingly as the two people in the car shielded their eyes from the sudden burst of light. "So tell me, lovebirds, are you two going to be joining us for dinner, despite the fact you're three hours late, or will you be going straight to your room?"

"We were talking, Pops," Bobby insisted, an angry edge to his tone. "Rogue and I are just friends. William thought he saw his son mutter something to his companion -- a mutant, no doubt, with hair like that, he judged. "You wouldn't mind pretending to be polite, Dad?" Bobby asked sarcastically. "Just for a night?"

"I'm not the one making out in the --"

Maddy pushed past her husband and waved to her son. "Bobby, you're home! You and your friend can wash up, and I'll put dinner on."

"Sure, Mom. Be right in," Bobby called back.

William grumbled to his wife as they walked back inside. "Oh, this is going to be fun."

"Shush, William," Maddy replied. "Go set the table."

Once everyone had come in, Rogue helped Maddy put the food on the table while Bobby sat down next to his father.

"I have to apologize if everything's a bit dry," Maddy said, trying to break the tension. "I tried to keep it on the stove, but --"

"It was our fault, ma'am," Rogue asserted. "We had some last-minute stuff to do, and we were a little late getting started."

William snorted. "A 'little' late? You were an hour late. 'Course, for Bobby, that's technically early." He turned to Bobby. "Let me guess. You were 'saving the world'?"

"Not the entire world, Dad -- no," Bobby said in a low voice. "Just Westchester."

"Suppose no one owns a razor in Westchester?"

Bobby ignored the urge to rise to his father's bait and instead reached for the bowl of mashed potatoes in front of him.

William flipped through the day's edition of the Daily Bugle. "I guess we should just be grateful you didn't bring that Topal girl around again," he added.

"Her name was Opal, Dad. With an 'O,'" Bobby said coldly, his voice steadily rising in volume as he angrily dished spoonfuls of potatoes onto his plate. "And the way you carry on, so help me, it's a wonder I invite anyone here."

Rogue watched the scene uneasily. "Uhm...Look at the time! Maybe we should all call it a night?"

Maddy placed a hand on the younger woman's shoulder. "Ignore them, child," she advised quietly. "That's what I always do."

William continued his perusal of the newspaper. "Once, just once," he said coldly, "is it too much to ask that you bring home a normal girl?" His eyes briefly widened in surprise as his newspaper crumpled in to shards of ice.

"Define 'normal girl,'" Bobby said dangerously.

"Don't you dare start using those blasted powers of yours in my home!" William began to shout. "You can pal around with your friends all day, but I will not tolerate your turning this house into --"

-- a sideshow! I won't have it!" Bobby finished. "Please, Dad. I've been hearing this crap for six years. Can't you at least write some new material?"

"You're the one trotting out the same old circus act, Bobby -- only the faces change! One week she's Italian. The next week it's Japanese. And now this one is...is..."

"Is what, Dad? A mutant?" Bobby stood up from the table. "That's what this is all about, isn't it? You're just disgusted by anything that doesn't fit into your limited definition of normal." Bobby moved behind his father, resting his hand on his father's chair. He turned and started walking quickly out of the room. "Sorry for you," he said more quietly.

"Bobby --?!" cried his mother.

"I'll call you, Mom," he said simply. "Rogue?"

"William?" Maddy said softly.

"Shush, Madeline." William was quiet, his head down and eyes focused on his hands resting on the table.

Behind him, Rogue broke the silence. "Maybe this isn't muh place to say, Mr. Drake," she began, "but over the years, Bobby has tol' me a lot about ya. He said ya was an honest man, a hard worker, a veteran of war an' a lovin' husband. Maybe it was just 'cause he didn't know for sure until today, but he never mentioned ya were a bigot."

She turned and left the room but the word still hung in the air.

Bigot.

Maddy quietly cleaned up the uneaten dinner and put it all away as her husband sat in silence, unmoving. When she was done, she walked out of the kitchen, leaving William alone in the darkness.

* * *

> <p>"Mutants! Look at all this trouble and destruction they're causing, Maddy!" William thundered, pointing at the news coverage of the Onslaught crisis in the city. "Just because they have superpowers, they think they can set up a three-ring circus anyplace they like -- and put innocent people at risk in the process!" <p>

The sound of a shattered dish in the kitchen ended his tirade.
"Maddy?" he called out softly.

When he received no reply, he got up and went into the kitchen. He found his wife on her knees on the floor, picking up ceramic tiles as she fought to keep the tears from rolling down her face. She looked up at him, and although the tears now gave way down her cheek, her voice shook with barely-contained fury.

"Almost forty years. Nearly forty years I've stood here and listened to you...railing on about one group or another. Blacks, Asians, Hispanics, gays. Now mutants. I tell you this, William -- I won't listen to it anymore."

He stood in stupefied silence in the doorway.

"Those mutants you're complaining so loudly about --" she pointed toward the window "--are right out there, not even 50 miles away, trying to save your life and mine -- and the lives of countless other people -- from something that could probably wipe us out without a thought. From the news reports, things are pretty bad in the city." Her eyes narrowed, and her voice tightened as she fought to maintain her composure.

She continued, her voice quieter. "And our son -- our Bobby -- is probably right out there with his friends trying to save us all from this 'Onslaught' thing, whatever it is. They're risking their lives -- our Bobby is risking his life for this -- and when it's all over they might be heroes for a moment, but folks will still begrudge them, will still hate them, because they're mutants. People like you, William."

He opened his mouth and tried to stammer a rebuttal, but the words would not come.

"Bobby might die today," she said with finality, then collapsed into

tears.

William knelt down and wrapped his arms around her. She returned his embrace, and they held each other until she could compose herself. When she pulled away, she saw that her husband had tears in his eyes.

"You go back in the living room and keep watching the news reports," Maddy said softly, patting William on the back. "I'll finish cleaning up and join you."

He nodded quickly and headed back to the television. Though the reception was unusually fuzzy, he could make out brightly costumed figures trying to help people out of the rubble that downtown New York City had become, thanks to Onslaught and his monstrous Sentinel robots.

Occasionally, he could make out a person or two that he recognized. White hair, dark skin. 'Storm,' he remembered. 'Bobby's field leader.' Flaming red hair, blue and yellow costume. 'Jean...something or other.' Tall man in blue and yellow who shot red blasts from his eyes. 'Cyclops...that boy...the one who came over when Bobby was going to go to that mutant school..."

Bobby. Where was Bobby?

He searched the screen urgently for some sign of his son. Again, some familiar faces, but no sign of Bobby.

Maddy sat down next to her husband on the couch and silently wrapped an arm around William's bent shoulders.

No sign of Bobby.

After a seemingly endless period of waiting and praying, they saw their son come onscreen. He was alive and healthy. William and Maddy embraced each other in silent relief, still keeping an eye on the screen, lest their son disappear again.

Bobby seemed to be conferring with some other brightly costumed figures. William's eyes narrowed. One of them -- a woman with a white stripe in her dark hair -- looked familiar. He remembered the night she and Bobby had come over for dinner. He remembered the sting of their words.

Bigot.

He felt the remembered shame of that night, and the recent memory of his wife's explosion at him in the kitchen compounded his sorrow.

Had he been wrong?

He saw his son and his companions turn around suddenly. The camera angle changed to show a monstrous armored figure leering at another brightly costumed group of people. He couldn't make out what the monster was saying -- It all sounded like one big growl to him.

Then the monster smiled.

And the screen went blank.

An instant later, the Drakes' neighborhood was bathed in darkness, and William felt his heart skip a beat.

In the darkness, William and Madeline drake held each other tightly and prayed for the safety of their son.

* * *

> <p>Graydon Creed stood amid the rubble of New York City, waving his hands and decrying the mutant menace that had caused all this destruction and suffering. <p>

And people were listening.

Watching Creed's press conference from home, William Drake turned off the television in disgust and walked outside.

End
file.